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Engaging Indian Youth with Heritage of Traditional Games including Board Games for Revitalization in Digital Gaming Era.

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Abstract

This research paper aims to make Indian youth realize the importance of Indian traditional games with the country's cultural heritage. Games used to play a significant role in the daily lives of youngsters but the contemporary youth is excessively engaged in digital games, which often lack body movement and face-to-face interaction. A total of 41 respondents comprised the sample of the study. The present study was conducted in Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

This research identifies the main reasons behind the lack of awareness in youth about traditional games. Further, analyzing the factors that can intrigue youth by exposing them to the historical significance and regional diversity of the country and how traditional games can bridge this gap. This can foster youth with a sense of familiarity and national unity after playing traditional games of different regions reflecting different cultures. The paper also lists the impact of digital games inspired by some traditional games and analyzes the usage of current technology such as Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality and Mixed Reality to influence the youth in playing traditional games. It also states how social media platforms can be used for influencing the youth about traditional games.

This research also includes the role of NEP (National Education Policy) 2020 for the promotion of traditional games and how to overcome the challenges arising in the implementation. The paper also explores the capabilities of traditional games in improving the mental and physical health of disabled individuals. Based on primary research methods including surveys and interviews, the paper will conclude numerous ways to make traditional games more appealing to the contemporary youth for a better engagement in this digital era.

Keywords: Psychological Impact, Cultural Preservation, Indigenous Games, Board games, Folk Games, Forgotten Indian games.

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INTRODUCTION

Background and importance: India is a country of high diversity and significant values deep rooted in its culture and heritage, which can be felt by playing traditional games. Many traditional games have been created portraying the lifestyle, values and regional culture of their respective time of origin. The revitalization of traditional games will give rise to the flexibility in the way youth perceive gaming in this digital era.

Value of traditional games: The elderly have lost the practice of playing ancestral games together which is hindering their transmission to the contemporary youth. Thus, teenagers and young adults are unaware of or

disengaged from their cultural pastimes. Traditional games can teach the youth some moral and ethical values with tactics of life. This could give them pleasure knowing about the games their parents and ancestors used to play in their youth. Michael Crichton, a world-famous screenwriter and author known for the Jurassic Park, inspiringly wrote in his 1999 novel “Timeline” that “If you don't know history, then you don't know anything. You are a leaf that doesn't know it is part of a tree.”.

Psychology of the contemporary youth in gaming: The youth addicted to digital games are highly anticipated by the comfort, sophistication and modernity of this digital era. This is not accepting change but being ignorant as a youngster as well as a citizen of India.

Existing researches: Researches have been made in the area upon the importance of traditional games. They provide a holistic benefit to the body and mind when practiced regularly and actively. All these games require technical and tactical skills along-with other physiological components like speed, strength, stamina, agility and coordinative abilities. Playing traditional games also is a significant personality development source. Experiential learning plays a crucial role, as traditional games provide hands-on, immersive experiences that facilitate cognitive and motor skill development. There are also global steps taken in the promotion of traditional games internationally. The Association for International Sports for All (TAFISA, Germany) and UNESCO are jointly striving hard to safeguard and promote traditional games across the world.

Research gap: There is a huge gap in the research based on the implementation of these indigenous games in youngsters’ lifestyle. The paper identifies various factors for the negligence of playing traditional games in the era while analyzing the effective ways of promotion in the best way possible. The effective ways include advertising traditional games on a national level, making the youth aware of the unknown traditional games and glorifying them visually for the contemporary youth. This paper explores many traditional Indian games which are played across India in different regions to promote the culture and heritage and also provide recognition to the respective regions.

TRADITIONAL GAMES VS DIGITAL GAMES:

Traditional games involve interaction, thought-provoking, brainstorming strategies, discussions and competition. They are better than digital games in the following ways:

- **Skill improvement:** Traditional games improve mental and physical skills. For example, traditional games such as congklak or gundu require simple calculation skills and strategies that help improve memory and learners' understanding of basic math concepts. Compared with conventional methods, learners who engage in traditional game-based learning tend to show improvements in critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. As students immerse themselves in game-based learning, they unknowingly refine their reasoning, pattern recognition, and adaptive problem-solving skills.
- **Better communication:** The traditional gaming experience includes the opportunities for shared physical touch, texture, mindfulness and close-range interaction, which digital games lack. Youngsters can relive the excitement of how their parents played games in their youth. It can also minimize generation gap between parents and youngsters.
- **Extreme flexibility:** From earlier times, the ability to twist and tweak the structure and dynamics of the traditional games has helped people from any caste, having different abilities and disabilities, body-type, region, etc. come together and play accordingly, promoting unity in the nation. This has helped preventing system exclusion in the nation from pre-colonial times. It shows inherent adaptability and inclusivity and also enhances creativity in the youth.

INDIAN TRADITIONAL GAMES:

Indian traditional games have a holistic learning and a wholesome fun experience for the youth. There are a wide variety of traditional games with different genres including board games, combat, self-defense, logical, aim-

based, chance-based, health-focused, weapon-based, strategy, etc. depending upon the interest of youth.

Indoor Games: Several Traditional Indian games are played indoors and are known for their strategic depth and cultural significance.

Figure 1 Chess board game. Source: Pixabay.com

- **Chess:** Originally known as "Chaturanga," meaning "four divisions of an army," chess originated in ancient India around the 6th century CE. It is a game of pure intelligence with no element of chance. The British later gave it its current English name. Chess is a globally recognized sport, and it has inspired many other games, including Janggi (Korean chess), Xiangqi (Chinese chess), and Shogi (Japanese chess).
- **Ludo:** The modern game of Ludo is a simplified, westernized version of "Pachisi" which originated around the 6th century CE. The original game was played with cowrie shells and had more complex rules.
- **Snakes and Ladders:** This game was initially called "Moksha Patam" or "Gyan Chaupar" and was created to teach children about morality and the consequences of good and bad deeds. The British later simplified the game.

Figure 3 Ludo board game. Source: Pixabay.com

Figure 3 Carrom board game. Source: Pixabay.com

- **Carrom:** Invented in the 18th century by Indian royalty, Carrom is a popular game that enhances concentration and hand-eye coordination.

Figure 4Aadu Puli Aatam. Source: handpickedstore.in

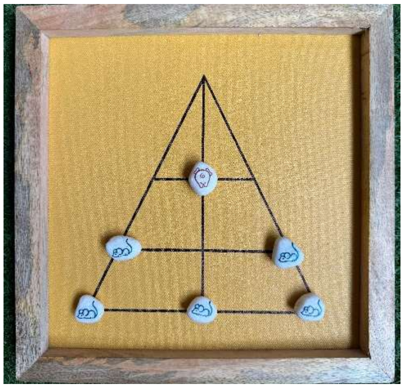

Figure 5 Pallanguzhi. Source: rollthedice.in

- **Other indoor games:** Pallanguzhi, Aadu Puli Aatam, Anaikallu, Dyuta and Chowka Bara are also notable traditional board games.

Figure 6. Kabaddi. Source: Wikipedia.org

Figure 7. Kho-Kho. Source: BharatiyaKhel.in

- **Kabaddi:** Believed to be 4,000 years old, Kabaddi is a team sport said to be based on prehistoric hunting and defense tactics. It was included in the Asian Games in 1990 and is now a prominent televised sport.
- **Kho-Kho:** Considered one of the oldest outdoor games, Kho-Kho is a chasing game with origins linked to Maharashtra. An early version of the game was called Rathera.

Figure 8. Gilli danda. Source: traditionalsports.org

Figure 9. Kancha game. Source: illagegamesblog.wordpress.com

- **Gilli-Danda:** This 2500-year-old game is a precursor to modern bat-and-ball games like cricket and baseball. The game spread to other parts of the world from the Mauryan Empire.

Kancha: Played with marbles ("goli"), Kancha's earliest evidence dates back to the Indus Valley Civilization around 2500 BCE

Figure 10. Lattoo. Source: Reddit.com

Figure 11. Laghori. Source: Medium.com

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- **Other outdoor games:** Traditional outdoor games include Lattoo, Hoop and Tire Rolling, Kavade, Rumaal Chori, Lagori, Gutte (5 Stones), and Kokku Para Para.

Combat and Self-Defense Games: These games evolved from martial arts and military training.

Figure 12. Mallakhamb. Source: kidzherald.com

Figure 13. Kalaripayattu. Source: Wikipedia.org

- **Mallakhamb:** Meaning "wrestling pole," this sport combines gymnastics, wrestling, and yoga. It was originally a training exercise for wrestlers.
- **Kalaripayattu:** Considered one of the oldest surviving fighting systems, this martial art originated in Kerala and has a history spanning over 3,000 years. Its name comes from the Malayalam words for "battlefield" and "to fight".

Figure 14. Thang Ta. Source: Wikipedia.org

Figure 15. Gatka. Source: Kreedon.com

- **Other combat games:** Thang-Ta, Gatka, and Silambam are also traditional Indian martial arts.

Tribal and ethnic games of north-east India: These games are integral to specific communities and their cultural identity.

Figure 16. Yubi Lakpi. Source: e-pao.ne

Figure 17. Lankapara (High Jump). Source: espn.in t

- **Yubi Lakpi:** A traditional sport from Manipur, its name means "coconut snatching" and it is a ceremonial re-enactment of the "Samudra Manthan" myth.
- **Other tribal games:** Liho-Laho, Kori (Hide and Seek), Posham Pa, Lanzukapru (High Jump) and Thingreira khangakhun (Tug of War) are played by various communities.

Traditional Card Games:

- **Teen Patti, Andar Bahar, Twenty-Eight, C, Satte Pe Satta, Dehla Pakad, and The Game of Judgement** are all popular traditional Indian card games.

Teen Patti. Source: homegrown.co.in

Outdoor Games: These games often involve physical prowess and are deeply rooted in Indian history and culture.

NATIONAL INITIATIVES PROMOTING TRADITIONAL GAMES:

The "Bhartiya Games" is a big initiative which is launched under Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) has a goal to introduce a list of 75 Indian games into schools, which will have a specific teacher-training program with the focus on student preparation and performance review by experts to give a report or feedback for further improvements. Similarly, the "Khelo India" has had healthy recognition of the traditions in the respective areas. It is also set to be included in the yearly Khelo India Youth Gaming events. These movements and initiatives are mentioned on the Indian government websites (.gov) such as BharatiyaKhel.in.

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY ON TRADITIONAL GAMES:

The NEP (National Education Policy) 2020 is aimed at holistic development, and has a key aspect in the promotion of Indian traditional games into the education system of India. Integrating traditional Indian games aligns closely with NEP's recommendations for experiential pedagogy. School students are exposed to practical learning while making traditional games as a part of their regular sports curriculum.

Promotion of cultural and regional games: Games like Kabaddi, Kho Kho, Mallakhamb, Thang-Ta, Kalaripayattu, Gatka, Yogasana, Silambam and many other regional or local games such as Posham Pa, Gilli Danda, Yubi Takpi, Kanche, etc. from all around the nation are being promoted to mix in the contemporary education system of India. This will aware the students about the nation's vastness and the cultural diversity.

Focus on minorities in India: The importance of traditional games and sports among Nagas, a tribal community in Nagaland, was explored using mixed-methods including primary and secondary source. The findings revealed that traditional games of Tangkhul Nagas like Liho-Laho, Kori (Hide and Seek), Thingreira khangakhun (Tug of War), Lanzukapru (High Jump), etc. reflects their values, beliefs and historical narratives which shape their identities. Traditional games will provide recognition to the minorities and other small communities in India.

Challenges in implementation:

1. Ensuring there are adequate infrastructure for taking care of all the necessary needs.
2. Having qualified teachers for the respective domains.
3. Keeping the students and their parents aware and satisfied with their curricular and extra-curricular

engagements.

4. Consistent integration and regular checks of the policy in the routine of students.

OBJECTIVE:

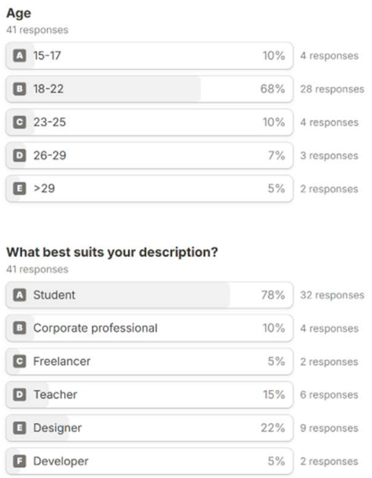
To identify and analyze the key factors and effective strategies for engaging contemporary Indian youth with various Indian traditional games, thereby facilitating their revitalization while promoting awareness and appreciation of the country's cultural heritage in this digital gaming era.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

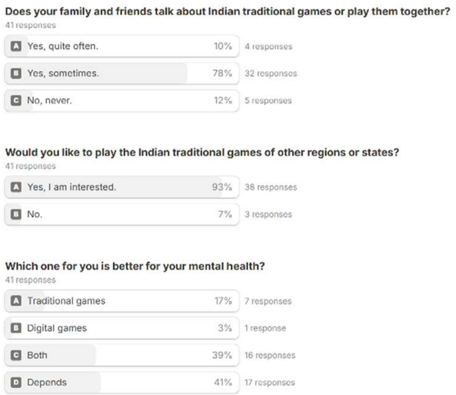
The primary data collection for the research was done through mixed-methods approach including Quantitative and Qualitative analysis. Self-structured questionnaire was prepared. Quantitative survey was done by snowball sampling method which was further analyzed thematically. Qualitative interview was done through purposive sampling strategy and further analyzed using descriptive analysis. Secondary data collection included exploring relevant research papers, websites (Research Gate and Google Scholarly), articles, government portals (education.gov.in, bharatiyakhel.in, ncert.nic.in), statistics and reports.

RESEARCH ANALYSIS:

Quantitative Analysis: There was an online form distributed among a variety of youth and people from different sectors for knowing their perspectives on traditional games. The form was generated with tally. so website.



The participants involved are mostly university students aged 18-22 from different backgrounds and regions of India.



Most of the participants are curious and interested in traditional games. The main reason being the frequent interaction on traditional games in their family.

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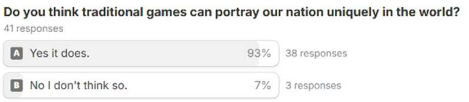
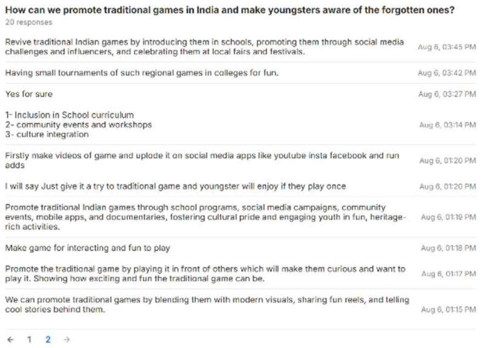
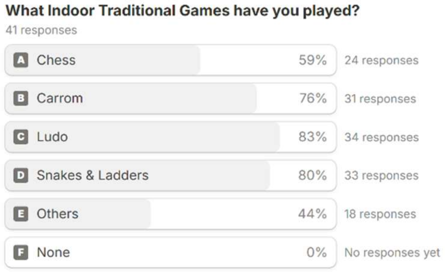
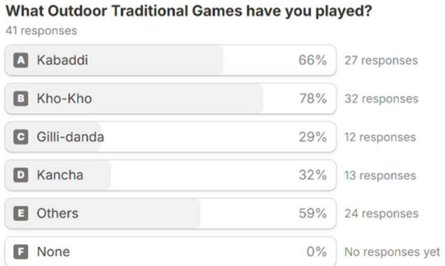


Most of the youth participants realize the significance of traditional games in the country and most of them would choose traditional games over digital games if they have friends around for more interactive play.

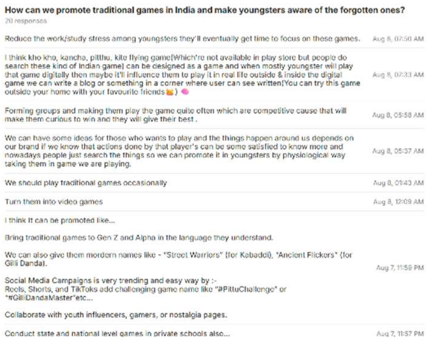


The positive mindset of younsters towards traditional games is a key aspect to note here. The result indicates the participants' willingness to explore traditional gaming.





All of them have played traditional games popular in India. This indicates that the participants are most likely to play popular games.



The quantitative survey revealed a significant interest among youth in the preservation and promotion of traditional games. A notable portion of the survey's respondents provided insightful suggestions for their revitalization. For example, key recommendations included organizing community-based events and using social media platforms to initiate hashtag challenges. These data-driven suggestions from the youth can be highly beneficial in shaping future strategies for the popularization of traditional games in India.

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These preferences of the participants can be analyzed to have a demand of a versatile traditional game.

Qualitative Analysis: The interview focused on the analysis and remarks of the experienced specialists in the relative fields regarding the promotion of traditional games in Indian youth. It resulted in the following conclusion:

- **Flexibility and ease of play:** The games should be flexible for tweaking according to the players' choices and have less rules and restrictions to remember.
- **Digital games not available traditionally:** Game Developers suggested to focus on the traditional games which are not yet made digitally to be promoted for recognition amongst the youth.
- **Update the traditional games for contemporary youth:** Game Designers explained to make the traditional games visually and culturally more appealing according to the gen-Z and gen-Alpha youngsters.
- **Reduce the coursework of the students in education system:** Senior educators demand a reduce in coursework and study pressure on youth so that they could explore traditional games and take active and consistent participation in them.
- **Origin facts:** Youth will be intrigued by reading a short origin story or facts about the traditional game they buy. It could be on the packaging or through a QR code scanner on it to create anticipation amongst the youth.

Factors resulting disengagement of youth in traditional games:

- **Hard to play and assemble:** Many traditional games are very hard to play because of their complexity. Many of the games are hard to assemble as well, which makes the youth procrastinate to play that game. There should be an easy way to play and visually instructed way to assemble the components displayed for the players.
- **Increasing smartphone penetration:** The use of smartphone is rising and while everything being digital, youngsters are losing the traditional touch in their lifestyle.
- **Lots of rules:** Many traditional games have a lot of rules and regulations with a big instructions manual to follow and remember. The instructions should be precise with some information visually presented.
- **Time-taking:** The long sessions with the traditional games with never-ending play results to disengagement the youth. The game should have some quick ending alternatives for a varied approach.
- **Not easily available:** Many games are not available easily and there are less inventors and awareness for those games to come to light. Relative startups and creators should be inspired and promoted for a good traditional gaming future.
- **Expensive:** Some traditional games including board games are expensive to be bought and played.
- **Lack of players:** Many youngsters lack the minimum number of players around most of the time for the traditional games to be played, which results to lack of willingness to play the game.

TRADITIONAL GAMES FOR DISABLED CHILDREN AND YOUTH:

Mental issues: The games like Pallanguzhi, Goli, Kho-Kho, Kabaddi, Pachisi, and Aadu Puli Aatamare are great in strategic thinking, teamwork, problem-solving, concentration, memory, quick decision-making and mind-

body coordination being significantly helpful for the children and youngsters not good in cognitive and mental abilities, co-ordinations and functions.

Physical issues: The physically disabled can modify the games for better understanding and playability. Games like Gilli Danda, Lagori, Goli, Anaikallu, and Kavade are great in hand-eye co-ordination, movement, flexibility, stamina, balance and core strength being significantly helpful for the children and youngsters with physical abilities.

Cerebral Palsy (CP) is a group of disorders causing issues in movement and posture due to brain damage while or shortly after birth. Research has shown improvement in the physical behaviour of the children and youth with this disability after playing traditional games. The study validation through informal interview among the parents of CP children revealed that adapted traditional game protocol shown improvements in their children's activity levels and participation.

Social and Emotional issues: The traditional games like Kabaddi, Kho-Kho, Rumaal Chori, and Lagori are great in teamwork, leadership, social communication, social interaction and social cooperation being significantly helpful for the children and youngsters struggling with emotional and social responsiveness.

Traditional games for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder in which a child has difficulty in social affairs such as communication, interaction, etc. The games with clear and simple rules such as Pachisi, Chaupar, Aadu Puli Aatam or Pallanguzhi can help them feel comfort and reduce their anxiety. Also, games like Kho Kho, Kabaddi or Lagori with teamwork and social interactions can help them get better at communication.

Traditional games for Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): Games having physical activities of running and movement can help the ADHD people channel their energy constructively. Kho Kho, Kabaddi, Lagori, Rumaal Chori are great examples. Also, demanding games such as Kho Kho, Kabaddi, Lagori, Rumaal Chori are very helpful for the children and youngsters who have ADHD for improving their focus and attention.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Effectively ways to overcome challenges in promotion and implementation of traditional games in schools and universities:

NEP (National Education Policy) 2020 is facing immense hurdles in its implementation. With the addition of the following points, the traditional games can be implemented and promoted easily in the lifestyle of young students: -

- Schools should have access to government funds for meeting the requirements of infrastructure and resources whenever needed. There are already initiatives provided by the government such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Model, Right To Education (RTE) Act, Scheme of Infrastructure Development of Minority Institutions (IDMI), etc. which is an advantage for the public schools as well as the private schools. There are government schemes which also aid in technological advancements even for private schools. Schools can follow the parameters and guidelines which will help them in availing such perks.
- There are Teacher training programs launched by the government in which teachers can participate or enroll themselves for improving their delivery to students. Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS), Sports Authority of India (SAI), National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) are some of the big schemes of government to focus and strengthen the teacher training programs, especially for the Physical Education (PE) teachers.
- There could be an overwhelming feeling arising self-doubt, ignorance or confusion in a student to handle

and be engaged in both academics and extra-curricular activities - thus, a need for a career counsellor and a psychologist is important in the educational premises.

- There also shall be online feedback form directly submitted by the students, faculties and heads of the schools to the government portals for creating statistics of the protocol being followed.

Effective ways to promote traditional games and aware youth:

- **Influencers:** The famous and relevant Youtubers can be given to promote traditional games and make around with some challenges to create the hype and awareness. Similarly with social media influencers on apps like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter/X, Twitch, etc. Some of such personalities are Dynamo Gaming (Aadii Sawant), Techno Gamerz (Ujjwal Chaurasia), Gyan Gaming (Ankit Sujan) and Mortal (Naman Mathur).
- **Digital database or encyclopedia:** Website with all-in-one information about traditional games should be promoted to aware youth regarding the existing games, how to play them and other data dividing them into filterable sections such as no. of players, category, ages of play, genre, region-wise, etc. for better searchability of desired games. For eg.: BharatiyaKhel.in.
- **Pricing:** The games should be available in reasonable and affordable price to the youth.
- **Easy availability:** The resources required to play the traditional games including board games should be available on offline stores as well as online stores where the youth is more active. Some online stores are rollthedice.in, indicinspirations.com and boardgamesindia.com.
- **Making traditional games digitally:** The traditional games can be made available digitally on platforms like Play Store, App Store, Itch.io, etc. to further promote them to the youth mostly interested in playing digital games. Some successful games in the market are LudoKing by Gametion, Chess by chess.com, Carrom Pool by Miniclip.com, etc.
- **Using contemporary technology:** The high-tech companies are using AR, VR and MR technology for training and prototyping purposes. We can use the following respectively: -
- **AR (Augmented Reality):** It could be used by the youngsters to have an idea of the look of the traditional game in real-world environment. A board game could be visualized and played through AR on a bed and similarly with an outdoor game in an open space through a phone using its camera.
- **VR (Virtual Reality):** It could be used as a digital gameplay to try the traditional game virtually as well. The game could be played using a Virtual Reality Headset.
- **MR (Mixed Reality):** It could be used for both visual appeal and gameplay, while the game also interacting with the player's real-world environment. This high level of engagement gives players the sensation of a traditional game's physical availability.

This could introduce young people to a variety of traditional games and encourage them to try new ones.

- **Visually appealing traditional games:** The board games and resources of traditional games should be made visually appealing for attracting youth.
- **Connecting people:** One of the problems youth faces is the non-availability of people with them for playing traditional games. There should be events and workshops including seminars for the same where people could connect with other traditional gamers.
- **National traditional games day:** One big step could be to make a national day solely to dedicate traditional games of India. Or promote and aware the youth on the International Day of Traditional Sports and Games (TSG) celebrated on August 14^{th} every year.

CONCLUSION:

We should preserve our culture and make the upcoming generations interested in the history of India and traditional games perfectly blend as the medium. Traditional games carry the essence of our cultural heritage and represents each state with its own uniqueness. We should 'pass and play' these games for consistent transmission

with our coming generations and folks from other countries to help spread the word.

The research examines many different genres of traditional games in India with their respective origins. There are startups, websites, initiatives and also government schemes such as NEP (National Education Policy) 2020 which is in play for the implementation and influence of traditional games on the youth. The paper describes some specific steps and measures as recommendations for a better way to promote and implement such efforts. The paper also identifies the factors resulting in the disengagement of youth from traditional games while also stating the best ways of promoting traditional games in this digital era. And it also explores how digitalization and technology can be used for the promotion of these indigenous pastimes. The study also mentioned some notable Indian traditional games for the development of disabled youth.

The sampling analysis states that youngsters are interested in traditional games and have the zeal for exploration. If implemented these ideas of impact and effect in the promotion of traditional games, it can be fruitful in making the youth resonate with the significance of these indigenous pastimes.

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